

The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics

The Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics (the Forum) was established in the mid-1980s to encourage cooperation and collaboration among federal agencies to improve the quality and utility of data on the aging population. The Forum, made up of 12 federal agencies that produce or use statistics on aging, provides these agencies with a venue to discuss data issues and concerns that cut across agency boundaries; facilitates in development of new databases; improves mechanisms currently used to disseminate information on aging-related data; invites researchers to report on cutting-edge analyses of data; and encourages international collaboration.

The specific goals of the Forum are to improve both the quality and use of data on the aging population by:

- widening access to information on the aging population through periodic publications and other means;
- promoting communication among data producers, researchers, and public policymakers;
- coordinating the development and use of statistical databases among federal agencies;
- identifying information gaps and data inconsistencies;
- investigating questions of data quality;
- encouraging cross-national research and data collection on the aging population; and
- addressing concerns regarding collection, access, and dissemination of data.

In 1986, the National Institute on Aging, in cooperation with the National Center for Health Statistics at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Census Bureau, established the initial, smaller Forum. Over a period of several years, the Forum played a key role in improving aging-related data by encouraging cooperation and data sharing among different agencies, furthering professional collaboration across different fields, and compiling aging-related statistical data in a centralized location. The meetings of the Forum helped promote a number of important developments -- the establishment of the Health and Retirement Study and the Study of Asset and Health Dynamics Among the Oldest Old; the comparison of disability measures across national surveys; the

acceptance of more standardized age categories; and the collection and presentation of statistics on more narrowly defined age and race categories.

In response to changes in the federal statistical system, the Forum was reorganized in 1998. As part of this reorganization, the original three members were joined by the Administration on Aging, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Health Care Financing Administration (now the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (Department of Health and Human Services), Office of Management and Budget, and Social Security Administration as organizing members of the reconfigured group. More recently, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the Environmental Protection Agency have joined the Forum.

The inaugural meeting of the “new” Forum was held in March 1999. At this meeting, the organizing members agreed that the Forum should focus its efforts on developing an indicators chartbook, exploring opportunities to integrate data for research applications, and initiating projects to improve measurement methods and data quality. In August, 2000, the Forum issued its first chartbook *Older Americans 2000: Key Indicators of Well-Being*.

The Forum’s second chartbook, *Older Americans 2004: Key Indicators of Well-Being*, will be issued on November 18, 2004. Member agencies of the Forum provided funds and valuable staff time to produce this report. The National Center for Health Statistics facilitated the production, printing, and dissemination.

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If you would like more information about *Older Americans 2004* or the Federal Interagency Forum on Aging-Related Statistics, contact the Forum’s staff director:

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